

PHILOSOPHY 22: CONTEMPORARY MORAL PROBLEMS

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FALL 2008

FIRST PAPER

ASSIGNMENT

Critically evaluate Singer's argument concerning our obligation to distant people in "Famine, Affluence, and Morality."

Your paper should proceed in two phases. In the first, expository phase, reconstruct and explain (in your own words) Singer's argument. What is the thesis for which he is arguing? What are his primary assumptions? How does he argue for those assumptions? This part of your paper is crucial. You cannot evaluate an argument well without first explaining clearly just how that argument is supposed to work.

Once you have reconstructed Singer's argument in your own words, you can proceed to the second, critical phase of your paper. Are Singer's assumptions sufficient to support his conclusion, or are there flaws in his argument? Are his assumptions justified? If you want to criticize Singer's view, make sure you consider how he would respond to your objections? If, on the other hand, you want to defend Singer, make sure you consider how a critic (such as Arthur) would respond to your defense. (You are free to discuss Arthur's reply to Singer in your paper, but it is not necessary.)

Remember that in a philosophy paper, it is your arguments that matter. Make sure you provide reasons that support the claims you make.

Note: You may discuss the assignment with your classmates, but the work you submit should be your own. You are *not* allowed to consult *any* secondary or outside sources for this assignment.

Format: Your paper should be no more than 5–7 pages in length. It should be double-spaced and set in a 12-point font.

Your paper is due at 5:00 PM on Friday, September 19.

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

You should submit your paper (as an attachment) via email to mesilverstein@amherst.edu. The subject of your e-mail should be: First Paper. I will return your paper to you via email with comments appended using Microsoft Word.